

Therapy Chat Episode 268



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[00:00:00] **Laura Reagan:** Therapy Chat Podcast Episode 268.

[00:00:04] **Announcer:** This is the Therapy Chat podcast with Laura Reagan, LCSW-C. The information shared in this podcast is not a substitute for seeking help from a licensed mental health professional. And now here's your host, Laura Reagan, LCSW-C.

[00:00:34] **Laura Reagan:** Hi, welcome back to Therapy Chat. I'm your host, Laura Reagan. Today I am so excited to be bringing you another conversation with a dear favorite guest, Sarah Peyton. Sarah is the author of the book, Your Resonant Self, which I love and often recommend. And the new book, Your Resonant Self Workbook, which I think is a [00:01:00] wonderful addition.

[00:01:00] We recorded this interview in December, 2020. And I think since then a lot has happened. We had the insurrection at the U.S capital. That was a horrible, horrible situation and people died. And our collective conversation in this country is about how could this happen? Who's behind it? Why? And what do we need to do to stop it from happening again?

[00:01:27] And one of the things that Sarah and I talked about is how, from a neuroscience perspective, people surround a charismatic leader and why that's effective from a neuroscience and attachment perspective. So it's very interesting to hear her perspective about that. But of course, we talked about a whole lot more than that.

[00:01:49] If you are someone who has attachment wounds or someone who works with people who have attachment wounds or childhood trauma, maybe all of the above, I [00:02:00] think you'll find my conversation with Sarah very interesting. And let's just dive right in.

[00:02:07] Hi, welcome back to Therapy Chat. I'm your host, Laura Reagan. And today I am so thrilled to have the honor of interviewing a guest who was here with us back in 2018, Sarah Peyton. Sarah, thanks so much for coming back to Therapy Chat today.

[00:02:24] **Sarah Peyton:** Laura, it's a pleasure. Thank you for having me.

[00:02:27] **Laura Reagan:** The pleasure is all mine and our listeners, I think, but I'm glad you enjoy coming here too. You are the author of Your Resonant Self, and you have a new book coming out in May, which is already available for pre-order called The Resonant Self Workbook. I can't wait to talk to you about that and your work, but before we even dive into it, let's just start off by you telling our audience a little bit about who you are and what you do.

[00:02:55] **Sarah Peyton:** Oh, thank you. Well, I'm a person who got really [00:03:00] curious about why did my brain work the way it did and what was happening inside of my brain that was causing it to be so uncomfortable in there. And the way that I kind of managed that before I got the point of starting to learn about the inside of the brain was that I would just, I was just an avid

reader. Cause as soon as I could get my eyes on a page, what I was starting to understand once I started to learn about the brain was I could get my dang default network mode turned off. And my default mode network as your listeners probably know is the part of the brain that carries the automatic voice. And it's the part of the brain that's sewing us into our social lives. That's keeping a consideration of everything that we're juggling in terms of relationship and what has to be done, and who's going to do it, and who needs to be connected with, and what's happening with the kids, [00:04:00] and is everybody doing okay? And does our partner have depression? And I mean, have we committed terrible acts that are making us feel ashamed? It's just like a constant, ongoing, kind of internal tailor that's sewing us all together.

[00:04:17] The more trauma we've had, the more, the needle of the tailor literally runs through the trauma center of the brain, runs through the amygdala and every time that we touch the sense of self, which is what the default mode network is doing, it's like we're giving ourselves an electric shock. So people learn to manage this in very different ways.

[00:04:40] You can learn to do it with addictions. You can do it with opioid addictions. You can do it with sugar addictions. You can do it with alcohol addictions, and you can do it with activities like always playing video games or always reading. And that's what I was, I was an always reader along with some other lovely chemical addictions.

[00:04:59] And it was [00:05:00] so intense that if I stopped my car at a stop light, I would grab the book that was beside me so that I could keep my default mode network from attacking me, it was a knockdown drag out kinda, kinda experience. And so I started to have experiences that began to gradually change my default mode network, and I was like 'what is going on?'

[00:05:33] So that's a little bit of an overview of my journey. It's been the journey of discovery and gradually making the inside of my brain a nice place to live.

[00:05:42] **Laura Reagan:** Oh gosh, you have such a pleasant demeanor. It's almost surprising to hear that it was ever unpleasant inside your mind, but I know that we all have our struggles and it's even silly for me to say that, but I [00:06:00] appreciate so much that you shared that that's your experience too, because, even when you were talking about the default network and all the, or the default mode network and all the is everyone okay? Is my spouse depressed?

[00:06:12] Like, that really made me think about how my brain works and the worry and fretting and yeah. Just like these little is everything okay? Is everything okay? Like checking and it really made it easier to understand that concept for me.

[00:06:26] **Sarah Peyton:** Yeah, the amygdala is actually sitting in there, sending out these pulse waves throughout the brain, just checking on everything.

[00:06:35] It's like always looking for signs that things are not good. So, yeah, so it needs a lot of warmth and kind of, really good mothering is what our amygdala's need. They need to be able to learn that we can, that we are strong enough and big enough to turn toward them, turn toward the emotional centers of the self that carry [00:07:00] the trauma seeds, the things that have been left behind by difficult experience. We need to develop a trust relationship, which is a little tricky to do, but is incredibly sweet work.

[00:07:13] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. Yes. Your work has been so significant in what I have come to understand about healing trauma, like, well, it's obviously significant and more than just me, but with my clients, I find it's so powerful the resonance that you talk about and that nurturing mothering of our amygdala's it's so different from these detached clinical, techniques that we sometimes hear about like how to move trauma through doing something versus the nurturing warmth, which is something that just has to come through a connection. Right?

[00:07:57] **Sarah Peyton:** Yeah. And I was, so I was so struck [00:08:00] by there's a, there's an epigeneticist up in Montreal named Moszyf. If anybody wants to look him up, I recommend his YouTube interviews rather than his scientific papers unless you are by training a geneticist.

[00:08:15] But I was at a conference with him, and he said our mother is in every cell of our prefrontal cortex. And I was like, what?

[00:08:28] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah.

[00:08:29] **Sarah Peyton:** So I was like, OK, if we've got 86 billion neurons and the prefrontal cortex is roughly one third of the brain, then I have 27 billion neurons in my brain devoted to my mother, that are carrying [00:09:00] my mother. And that was quite an intense realization. It was like okay. I love my mom. My mom passed on some years ago and I love her. But she was massively impacted by the trauma that she lived through as a little one to the point where she didn't often remember things that had happened and couldn't exactly track

who I was sometimes. So, I mean, we're, we're talking about growing up in the shadow of a brain that was fractured by its own trauma, right?

[00:09:22] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah.

[00:09:22] **Sarah Peyton:** So I was like, oh my goodness. My mother is in all these cells of my prefrontal cortex. What does this mean for me and my future?

[00:09:32] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah your like thats a scary thought.

[00:09:33] **Sarah Peyton:** I just thought I would move away from her and I would be fine, call her on Sundays. So, but I love sort of this modern metaphor that we have with updating our computer systems with new software and in a sense that we [00:10:00] do get to update the moms that we carry within us. I often think about it as like that we get to heal our own internal mothers, and we get to see the mothers that should have been supported and loved themselves and kept safe from trauma.

[00:10:10] So it's quite a journey to do mother upgrades, which I think is sort the funny, intention of all therapy in a way.

[00:10:20] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. Right. It's really, that's what it comes down too. Call it what we want, but that's, what's really happening.

[00:10:28] **Sarah Peyton:** Yeah.

[00:10:28] **Laura Reagan:** One of the things that struck me as we were talking before the recorded part of our interview, is thinking about how right now, as we're talking, it's December, 2020, and this episode, when people are hearing, it will be out in early March or late February, 2021 right now in the United States and really around the world there's so much conflict and divisiveness and you know, violence and here in our country, [00:11:00] politically, we are very divided. There's a lot of mistrust of people who have different views as well as just the ongoing problem of systemic oppression and racism. And your work is about how we are interconnected and right now we feel so divided as a population. And I'm wondering if you can talk a little bit about how your work and this, what we're doing in our brains, how it all fits together with how disconnected we feel and maybe how we can reconnect.

[00:11:35] **Sarah Peyton:** Yeah. Well, as you mentioned in the introduction, I have a new book coming out, Your Resonant Self Workbook, this workbook comes from this wondering really, it comes out of the wondering of, why, why

do our brains do what they do? Why do we do things that seem self-defeating? Why do we have, why do we cut [00:12:00] ourselves off from others? I was reading a beautiful Rebecca Sulnet article this morning, where she said our humanness, our humanity comes from our ability to expand our circle of belonging out to people who don't look like us, out to people who don't think like us, out to people that don't worship the same God we worship. She said this is in a way she was saying, this is our task, is to expand our circle of love. And one of the things that stops us from expanding the circle of love is this is, is a, is something that the human brain loves. It loves to blame.

[00:12:46] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah.

[00:12:48] **Sarah Peyton:** So in my progressive moments may love to blame Trump for all kinds of things. And, folks who are Republicans [00:13:00] may in their particularly conservative moments, really love to blame progressives for all kinds of things. And this is this mobilization of blame and mobilization also of the experience of disgust, is hugely important for understand what's happening in our world right now.

[00:13:22] So for the last four years, we've been either watching with great delight or watching with stupified horror, the people who are, who have been running the show and the facial expression that we've been seeing more than any other is a facial expression of disgust and this is a very powerful and divisive emotion, which I have the sense. I haven't actually looked at all of the current more conservative or right wing leaders across the globe right now. But the [00:14:00] ones that I have looked at including the prime minister of India, including the fellow who's, running Hungary, including Putin, and including Trump, use disgust with almost a mastery that orchestrates a rising tide of exclusionary response. Let's keep the Syrian refugees out. Let's reclaim the white make america great. Let's reclaim the white Russian world of ownership that the former Soviet union had like, there's this mobilization of a very vulnerable part of us as humans, which is the disgust circuit or the whole disgust apparatus in the human body, which includes our facial expression, includes a visceral response. And [00:15:00] when we admire and place our attention on a leader who is mobilizing the population with disgust oh, it's so rewarding for human brains. We are so vulnerable to this kind of reward because it creates ingroup- outgroup.

[00:15:22] And in ingroup- outgroup, we start to experience this rush of oxytocin and belonging that when we are part of the ingroup we get to feel when we look at the people in the outgroup. So when the president of the United States speaks about immigrants with words that are connected to large groups of

rodents or of swarms of insects. Then what we're getting is we're getting this oxytocin reward.

[00:15:54] I mean, sometimes I just sit and spend some time mourning our human brains and [00:16:00] our vulnerability to being moved toward divisiveness. And I'm just, I've been speaking for quite a little time now, is this a, is this what you were thinking of when you ask Laura?

[00:16:11] **Laura Reagan:** Yes. Yes, very much. And it's, for one, everything you're saying is ringing very true to what I have observed, but also I don't know about the disgust circuit. And so I think that caught my attention. It's pretty interesting. I'm just in a very basic way, and I hope you will expand on this, but what I'm thinking about is the oxytocin reward. And as soon as I think of oxytocin, I think of, well, I think of breastfeeding and when I think of breastfeeding, I think of nurturing mother.

[00:16:45] And it's interesting to imagine that we get a rush of the hormones that feel bonding...

[00:16:51] **Sarah Peyton:** yes.

[00:16:51] **Laura Reagan:** When we are excluding others.

[00:16:54] **Sarah Peyton:** Yeah. And then there is a host of I'll speak about this host of after effects. [00:17:00] And then you can bring me back to any questions you have about disgust itself, but there's a host of after effects because as soon as we, we otherize a group of people, then we no longer actually are looking at their facial expressions very closely. We stopped seeing them. And so we stopped getting the feedback, the nuanced feedback about their humanness and about their emotions. We lose our empathy when we move into the ingroup- outgroup experience, the more strongly we have the oxytocin rush of belonging, the less brain resource we have available to be able to, to perceive and understand and have empathy and compassion for other groups.

[00:17:46] There are a lot of neurobiological after effects of the experience of having more power than someone else as a human. And the more that we have power imbalances, the less [00:18:00] we read people that we consider to be below us in the power structure. It's just like a natural part of our human brain is this kind of leaving of connection with others.

[00:18:15] And I think this is why Rebecca Sulnat was saying that our human, that our humanness, that our humanity depends on us having an expanded circle

of inclusion, because then we're holding ourselves with humility. Humility being, the primary remedy for imbalance of power and the way that it turns off human brains.

[00:18:40] **Laura Reagan:** So interesting. This wasn't what I was expecting us to talk about, but just as an aside, it's like, people are always saying, how can people turn a blind eye to the pain of people who are being separated from their children when they come to the border of our country? [00:19:00] It's like, who could turn their backs on even the thought of those families being separated in that way. But then, you know, what you're talking about makes me understand in a small way that it's first of all, it's kind of unconscious and it's happening in the brain as a way to help those people feel more connected with each other, I guess, the people who don't care about that, or even want that, that type of separation to happen.

[00:19:26] **Sarah Peyton:** Right. It's a bit like that's an unnoticed, unconscious side effect.

[00:19:32] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah.

[00:19:32] **Sarah Peyton:** Of the creation of the circle of belonging, those folks who aren't seeing it don't even know they aren't seeing it. If we think about Melania wearing an "I don't care" jacket, when she went to the facility, where there was family separation then we can kind of feel how much unconsciousness is a part of the picture. Like, there, there's not even a conscious awareness of it as being [00:20:00] undesirable or of it impacting people's humanity, the, the power of oxytocin and ingroup belonging is so great. And oh, I just wanted say that it moves that in, in, in research that's been done with undergraduates. For example, when they look at somebody, a picture of someone who's homeless, they don't even put that person in the person category in their brain. Their brain moves them into the category of rubbish instead of in the category of humanness, with greater and lesser degrees of contempt and disgust connected with the imagery that's being used.

[00:20:44] **Laura Reagan:** Wow.

[00:20:44] **Sarah Peyton:** Yep. We don't even know, we don't even know that we're, that our humanness is being turned off.

[00:20:52] **Laura Reagan:** So this is interesting, cuz it kind of feels paradoxical to we were talking about the, we were beginning to [00:21:00] talk about how

we're all interconnected. And this is a way that we feel connected by being disconnected.

[00:21:08] **Sarah Peyton:** Yeah, yeah, it's absolutely right. And as we, you, we come with our humility and allow other people to be just as important in the world, as we are to let, the groups that we don't usually see whether those are homeless people, or whether those are people who wear national costumes that look foreign, or whether that's people who have a different skin color, or people who have a different worship, a different sense of God, if we, if we allow ourselves to truly feel into the joining and the welcome of each individual person, I often think about how, about how our world devalues so many, so many voices, so many brains, [00:22:00] so many hearts that could be giving us so much.

[00:22:04] I like to imagine living in a world where every voice really does matter. A grandfather in Peru matters just as much as an Aboriginal person in Australia. And that matters just as much as somebody who's sweeping the street in Tokyo matters just as much as someone who's serving in Congress. This sense of an intention for inclusion is of great importance to our being able to remain emotionally alive to everyone.

[00:22:41] It's such a funny request. You know, our brains have kind of a natural limit of about 150 people where beyond that people kind of move into a blur of humanness, but a blur of humanness is much more inclusive for us than thinking that beyond that people move [00:23:00] into a blur of whiteness, or move into a blur of just Christianity and that everyone else doesn't really exist.

[00:23:06] So we get to really leverage our human capacity to live out any values that we have of inclusion, mattering, respect, and having humility with each person that we meet. It's quite well founded in research as well as being supported by most major world religions.

[00:23:31] **Laura Reagan:** Well, it's beautiful to put the philosophical and the values into practice in neuroscience.

[00:23:41] **Sarah Peyton:** Yeah. Yeah. And I had started out saying that one of the reasons that I wrote the Your Resonant Self workbook was because I was out in the world and I was teaching the science of self-compassion and how we learn to turn toward ourselves. And some people just weren't [00:24:00] able to do it. They just, they were just stymied. They had, they would read the book, they would do the meditations, but they didn't get the shifts that they were looking for. And as I was working, I started to realize, oh, we have agreements

with ourselves. We have agreements with ourselves that stop us from moving into self-compassion. And we also have agreements with ourselves like if we have an agreement with ourselves, not to believe that we belong absolutely, that we matter absolutely then we're walking around with internal sense of insecurity, which makes us vulnerable to the mobilization of disgust to create ingroup- outgroup. And cause it's so reassuring for our sort of oxytocin starved systems that we get to belong because we're for example, white, or that we get to belong because we're Christian rather than Muslim, or we get to belong [00:25:00] because we're Muslim rather than Christian, you know, whatever the belonging is, it can be such a huge relief to a body that doesn't know how to agree to belong.

[00:25:13] And so that's what that Your Resonant Self Workbook allows and supports is an exploration of the different kinds of agreements that we have that stop us with ourselves, that we have that stop us from believing these very foundational things. Again the intention of therapy for people to have a sense of mattering, an absolute sense of mattering, for people to have a sense of belonging, for people to know that their voice matters, to feel the capacity to mobilize, to take action, to be able to do something as simple as voting or to do something as complex as running for office. We want these things we want, an [00:26:00] engage and alive populous to be able to, to help counteract some of the forces that you were mentioning when you brought up the subject of today's world. The forces of systemic oppression, the forces of systemic racism, and of course, divisiveness that we're so deeply in the presence of.

[00:26:20] Yes. Well, I'm, I am curious to ask you about these agreements with ourselves. How, where do we all have them? Do some of us have them and how do we get them? If we do?

[00:26:34] Yes, we all have them. Everybody has them and they are in a way they are again to use this metaphor of software. They are a program that we've inserted that allows us to have a shortcut response to complex experiences and complex traumas. So, this brings us on a almost cellular level [00:27:00] to the work of Beatrice Beaby who is a researcher and her team, who are researchers in New York city. And we mentioned Beatrice when we spoke together in Your Inner Resonance Therapy Chat, Laura. So, it's not a completely new person in our space, but Beatrice Beaby as you remember was the woman who discovered that we, by the age of four months start to edit our facial expression vocabulary and to bring it in accordance exactly with what our mother can easily do and reflect with her facial expression vocabulary.

[00:27:38] So if our mother doesn't do sadness, Then our face stops doing sadness unless great grief forces its way through, but just in the regular nuanced ways that faces express emotion by the age of four months, we stop expressing sadness. If the mother never [00:28:00] gets angry and won't turn away from, or does not reflect an angry face for the baby, then the baby stops doing anger and some of the things that people may notice, this is something I noticed myself was that I when when I was angry I would cry.

[00:28:18] **Laura Reagan:** Mm-hmm

[00:28:18] **Sarah Peyton:** and the other thing I noticed was that when I would cry, I would try not to cry and I could feel my mouth kind of arriving, I would cry but my mouth would be trying to smile. Our body is wired to reflect viscerally what our face does, like we're in this interesting continual loop between body response and facial expression. So, what the [00:29:00] body, so for example, if we have somebody pull their eyebrows together in an angry expression even if they're not angry, their heart rate will go up. There's an absolute sort of interwoven cause and effect both between what the body's experiencing and how the face wants to express that and what the face is expressing and how the body tries to, to go right along with that.

[00:29:26] And, uh, and so it's quite a profound thing for us to have facial expressions completely wiped out of our emotional expression.

[00:29:38] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. I'm deep in thought. And I think, I think one question that came to mind for me when you were asking, when you were talking about the facial expressions and Beatrice Beaby's work is you kind of said how the baby learns, not to show the expression that the mother doesn't resonate with, but what about if the [00:30:00] mother's expressions I'm thinking of a very fearful mother, does it change the way that babies face appears more to show more fear or?

[00:30:10] **Sarah Peyton:** I think that's one of her conclusions, although that was less what she was, that's something that I haven't found precisely in her writing.

[00:30:20] **Laura Reagan:** Okay, sorry.

[00:30:21] **Sarah Peyton:** So transparently, quite transparently, her work moves me so deeply that about a paragraph a month is usually enough for me.

[00:30:35] **Laura Reagan:** I know what you mean. I have books like that and authors like that too. It's like small chunk goes a long way.

[00:30:43] **Sarah Peyton:** Yeah. Yeah. And her, her work talking about the characteristics of disorganized attachment, was that I spent about three years just really focused on to create a bit of an integration of that for myself [00:31:00] and it was a revelation to work with it so deeply. So she may very well have written about an answer to this question, and I may not have found the answer yet.

[00:31:11] So, but what we do know is for example, if a mother is very fearful and her face just stays in a fear response all the time, then that's one of the things that people consider a precursor for disorganized attachment. You remember?

[00:31:29] **Laura Reagan:** Yes.

[00:31:29] **Sarah Peyton:** Maybe Bonnie Badmuck and other authors writing that, uh, the disorganized attachment comes from the parent being terrifying or terrified. So we integrate into ourselves this deep sense of the world, not being safe of the world, being irresolvably dangerous. And any kind of irresolvability lands quite harshly in an infant's body. So irresolvable grief, [00:32:00] irresolvable fear, unquenchable rage, all of these things take babies away from their own natural fluidity and their own dance of exploration, self understanding, and of the kind of connection that leads to secure attachment.

[00:32:17] **Laura Reagan:** Mm-hmm.

[00:32:18] So Sarah, the agreements with ourselves that you mentioned

[00:32:23] **Sarah Peyton:** Yeah.

[00:32:23] **Laura Reagan:** Are they made in that first four months or?

[00:32:28] **Sarah Peyton:** Yes. Thank you for bringing us back to that. That was exactly where I was going. There are all kinds of agreements that are made in those first four months and one of the agreements, one of the types of agreement that's made takes us back to our conversation about Steven Porges and a hierarchy of safety that comes with an understanding of how important it is for us to have a yes answer to the question am I safe, [00:33:00] do I matter? When we get a yes answer to the question am I safe, do I matter, the nervous system shifts gear into Social Engagement. And you'll remember that social

engagement does all kinds of wonderful things for the human body. It makes the immune system work really well. It causes us to run on oxygen instead of cortisol. The red blood cells literally pick up more oxygen when we have a sense of being safe and mattering, and when we have this experience of being safe and mattering, our brains are working at their best. And we have a lot of cognitive flexibility and we can make good decisions, take a lot of things into account, handle complexity. There's just all kinds of lovely benefits of the nervous system being in social engagement and having a sense of mattering and belonging and of course, you'll tie that back into our conversation about belonging before, if you have a contract that [00:34:00] says you don't matter but you get to belong to a group of white people, then all of a sudden your nervous system gets to work better and your immune system gets to work better. So again, we were talking about some of the rewards that come from going into those circles of belonging and circles, where others are excluded.

[00:34:23] So quite profound rewards that we have that we need to counteract and with the humility, but the contracts can take us into a frozen state. So mothers will turn away, not just from sadness, not just from anger, not just from fear, but we know avoidantly attached mothers will turn away from their baby's joy. They'll diminish their baby's joy instead of supporting and encouraging the expression of life energy.

[00:34:57] And maybe you had the experience [00:35:00] of having clients who say I'm too much. I've always been too much. I'm always too much. This is the voice of this baby, a baby whose mother has turned away from joy and diminished joy. Now a contract begins to be formed. An unconscious contract, an unconscious agreement where the child who has joy that's turned away from the result when someone turns away from our joy, our joy is essentially dyadic when someone turns away from our joy, than a shame comes, cortisol.

[00:35:35] Yeah.

[00:35:35] And some people say that shame is the emotion that brings the largest flow of cortisol of any human emotion. It's like were getting a neurobiological cattle prod to our heart with the flow of cortisol. And we go oh my god this mother turned away from me, my parent or caretaker turned, [00:36:00] turned away from me because I was too much. I have to be less. And we create with the help of the memory of the shame, we create internal prohibitions that stop us from expressing our full self, because we never wanna have to have that, that jolt of shame again.

[00:36:23] We want to try to figure out how we can behave, that will allow us to belong to our circles and to be able to have that experience of being safe and mattering that lets everything work well. Cause our very first circle of belonging is our circle of belonging with our moms. So yes, we start creating these unconscious agreements very early.

[00:36:47] And then we continue everyone continues to make these, as we go through present time with any kinda trauma or experience, where we're not fully accompanied, we'll try to make up [00:37:00] an agreement we can keep with ourselves that will keep us safe. That we keep us safe from shame, from humiliation, that will keep us safe from exclusion. Is this making sense, Laura?

[00:37:13] Yeah, very much. And now I'm just so curious about how, because when I think about something that starts so early, I know that as a therapist, it can be very hard for us to reach that information because it's held nonverbally and it can be very hard for any client to be able to access that information, to be able to tell you, you know?

[00:37:39] Yeah.

[00:37:40] So now I'm curious about, so gosh, how do we reprogram those contracts, I guess?

[00:37:48] Yes. I mean, something that therapists really notice with their clients quite soon into the therapy relationship they'll notice oh, [00:38:00] this client can't get mad, this client is afraid of anger, this client never expresses fear it's very interesting to be able to include curiosity about disgust in our work with clients because if someone has a frozen disgust circuit, which can happen from early experiences of our disgust not being okay, then what happens, is that they won't know when things are too much.

[00:38:30] Part of what disgust does when it's in its healthy place, when it's in its right place, rather than being mobilized by leaders who use it to create ingroup- outgroup experiences is one of the things that disgust does is it gives us a healthy sense of our boundaries. It lets us know when someone is intruding or violating us. And if we've got a frozen disgust circuit. If we've made an agreement with ourselves, not even to feel disgust anymore. [00:39:00] And I'll talk about that in just a moment, then what happens is that we can't tell, we can't find our own know. It can happen with rage; it can also happen with disgust that we'll lose our know.

[00:39:14] **Laura Reagan:** That I see so much. So, so much.

[00:39:17] **Sarah Peyton:** We can welcome as when we're working with people is we can welcome in a way, the return of nausea. If we're not used to welcoming nausea, if in the old days before I started to understand this about disgust when I was working with someone and they said, oh, I'm feeling nauseous I would panic. I would like to try to get them away from that.

[00:39:43] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah.

[00:39:44] **Sarah Peyton:** I would think, oh no, I'm making them sick, but instead if we go, oh good, we need the nausea. And so a part of what's happening in the therapy experience is that the therapist has a wider window of welcome for [00:40:00] emotions than the mother originally had. The therapist is saying, Hey, where's the anger? Where's the fear? Hey, where's the disgust? And welcoming it when it comes. Which is a beautiful counteractive experience to these early experiences that are preverbal because much of what's happening in the therapy relationship is also nonverbal.

[00:40:24] **Laura Reagan:** Mm-hmm.

[00:40:24] **Sarah Peyton:** And so becoming aware of our own facial expression vocabulary is of great importance when we're sad. Does our face get to show sadness, or do we try to hide it? Do we get to have outrage and fury on behalf of our clients? Not expressed in a way that would scare them, but in a way that gives force and emphasis to our longing for their protection and longing for something better for them, it's quite, without even knowing it these are the tools that every therapist is using.

[00:40:58] And when you start to [00:41:00] look at the contract work, if you're starting to get interested, the contract work actually is quite extraordinary for allowing previously un- allowed circuits to come back online. So if we say, you know, do you have a contract? Do you have a contract not to feel anger? And then people will often say, I even remember the day that I made that that contract when there was a middle of a domestic violence scene at home. And I was like, I'm never going to be that person. This is a traumatic experience of closing down emotional expression. People will often have access to, once we start to ask, people often can touch the deep "in order to's" that come with the contract. I will not be sad in order to never burden anyone. And the person that we are never burdening is probably [00:42:00] our mother but it gets globalized out.

[00:42:03] So you said is what we do with things that are nonverbal?

[00:42:09] And what we do is we remember that the amygdala has no sense of time. That the amygdala, we talked about this in our first conversation. That the amygdala has no sense of time and it creates trauma tangles. And what's hard about that is that people have to live with PTSD and the intrusion of traumatic memory but what's wonderful about that is that the amygdala is forever available for resonant support and healing.

[00:42:39] **Laura Reagan:** I like that perspective. Mm-hmm. When you said that about the never being like that with the domestic violence scene. I immediately thought of for myself when I was a kid not a domestic violence scene, fortunately but it was [00:43:00] just a moment of thinking I am not going to cry at school

[00:43:06] **Sarah Peyton:** oh yeah.

[00:43:07] **Laura Reagan:** Like I think I was probably like seven and saying this year I will not cry at school and like reevaluating at the end of the year. Well, I didn't quite make it, but I'm going to try again next year. I will never, I will not cry at school. And once I learned how to somehow learned like it wasn't like I did it like, okay, step one, step two, step three.

[00:43:30] But when I learned how not to cry, when I felt like crying, I was so proud of myself. I was like a triumph. I conquered the sensitivity that I was always was told was too much. So that resonated so much for me. Like I can remember just making as such a young child, that conscious decision to try to change that about myself.

[00:43:53] And, you know, of course later it became problematic that I couldn't access what I [00:44:00] felt. Right, right.

[00:44:02] **Sarah Peyton:** It's a beautiful example. So, if we got work with you with the unconscious contract process, we would be saying, is the contract something like I will not feel what I feel.

[00:44:23] And then we would say to, and then you would fill in the blank there to you can, if you want to

[00:44:30] **Laura Reagan:** I think it was to be safe just to, to be safe.

[00:44:33] **Sarah Peyton:** Yeah. It sounded like it might also be belonging, to be safe. Yeah.

[00:44:37] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah.

[00:44:38] **Sarah Peyton:** And then the last part of the contracts is such an interesting part, are the words no matter the cost to myself. And with those words, we begin to feel into the consequences [00:45:00] and the aftereffects of the contracts, the cost of the contracts, and then once we have that... see, it's so unusual to use words to describe these internal agreements that we have. Once we have used the words, then we get to say [inaudible] oh, sometimes the part says, no, I didn't sign contract. Then you say it again.

[00:45:25] But often the part says, yeah, I heard that contract. And then we say do you want to keep it, do you like it, is it good for Laura now?

[00:45:33] **Laura Reagan:** No!

[00:45:34] **Sarah Peyton:** Yeah, exactly. And then I find it very useful myself to actually formally release the contract and to say, "I release you Sarah from from this contract!" I revoke this now. And then we say what will we do instead? And what would your blessing for yourself be Laura, instead of this?

[00:45:57] **Laura Reagan:** To feel all my feelings. [00:46:00]

[00:46:00] **Sarah Peyton:** And to enjoy belonging with people who also care about feelings.

[00:46:05] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah.

[00:46:06] **Sarah Peyton:** And to create a community where people get to have their feelings and share it and talk about it and how important it is.

[00:46:16] **Laura Reagan:** Yes.

[00:46:17] **Sarah Peyton:** Which is what you've done.

[00:46:20] **Laura Reagan:** I'm trying. Well, that's so beautiful and really powerful. And it makes me wonder with the workbook. Is it meant to be worked by someone on their own or is it meant to be worked with a therapist together?

[00:46:41] **Sarah Peyton:** Just like the first book, the Your Resonant Self book, it's very much available either or. For people to do with therapists, for people to do with peer groups, for people to do on their own journaling processes. I've

even had people start to do this kind of work with their cell phone recorders [00:47:00] and listen to it or record their voice, the voice of the part of the self that has the contract, and then they get to listen to it and think about it. Yeah. So there are many creative ways to work and the more severe our trauma is the more we need therapy support.

[00:47:20] I mean I have severe trauma and I love therapy.

[00:47:26] **Laura Reagan:** I love therapy too. It's like, where else can you just talk about yourself.

[00:47:33] **Sarah Peyton:** I know.

[00:47:34] **Laura Reagan:** And someone just wants to listen, no matter how much you want to talk about yourself, they just, they want to hear it, you know.

[00:47:41] **Sarah Peyton:** And they're wondering about us, their full of curiosity, and they become part of the mother upgrade. That's the most wonderful thing, when we find people who are resonant and who understand us and they become a part of the new 27 billion [00:48:00] neurons.

[00:48:01] **Laura Reagan:** Mm-hmm and that's so powerful too, that whole image of the prefrontal cortex that you mentioned with the billions of cells and the mother being 27 billion neurons. Because it just makes me think whenever I hear about epigenetics, of course, I think about intergenerational transmission of trauma.

[00:48:21] **Sarah Peyton:** Yeah.

[00:48:22] **Laura Reagan:** And when we replace or reshape the cells that weren't mothering us the way we needed with ones that are more nurturing, then we have more to pass on.

[00:48:33] More to pass on, it changes our children's lives. And really as therapists, it changes the lives of everyone that you are holding.

[00:48:43] Yeah.

[00:48:44] And everyone they interact with and that is the interconnectedness.

[00:48:48] **Sarah Peyton:** That is the interconnectedness. Yes. Yes. Yes. And it allows for an expanded sense of belonging so that we don't have to create our belonging in [00:49:00] divisiveness.

[00:49:00] **Laura Reagan:** Mm. That is so my wish for us as a culture to stop trying to spread violence and war around the world and spread connection and community.

[00:49:13] **Sarah Peyton:** Yeah. And thoughtful long-term consideration of our actions.

[00:49:19] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. Yes. And how we're even connected to our planet.

[00:49:23] **Sarah Peyton:** Yeah, exactly. Yeah.

[00:49:25] **Laura Reagan:** Sarah, I am so grateful for the work you're doing truly it's very unique and really, I know it's influenced by so many others, and you always share that, but what you're doing, isn't like what anyone else is doing that I've seen.

[00:49:40] So I'm really grateful for what you've created to share this with all of us.

[00:49:46] **Sarah Peyton:** Thank you so much, Laura. I'm just delighted. I love our conversations.

[00:49:51] **Laura Reagan:** Me too. So where can people get the new book? I know it's in pre-order availability [00:50:00] right now.

[00:50:00] **Sarah Peyton:** Yeah. At your friendly online book seller, so if you're someone who enjoys Amazon, it's listed for preorder on Amazon, and other online book sellers, and it's coming out, it'll be sent out on May 25th. So if you order in advance then you'll get the first copies as they come out the press.

[00:50:22] **Laura Reagan:** Wonderful. And then for everyone who just can't wait, if they don't have the Your Resonant Self book that's already available.

[00:50:30] **Sarah Peyton:** Yes. Yes. That's available.

[00:50:36] **Laura Reagan:** I was just going to say, can you tell everyone where they can find all the good stuff you're doing?

[00:50:43] **Sarah Peyton:** Oh, yes, sarahpeyton.com now, a new working website where your products will be delivered to without the intervention of my beloved help desk person just rolled [00:51:00] out the new website this last week. So it's very exciting. Sarahpeyton.com.

[00:51:04] **Laura Reagan:** Congratulations on that. And I know that's a big undertaking. And I know also that you have many offerings on your website. Will you just briefly tell people what type of stuff they can find there?

[00:51:17] **Sarah Peyton:** Mm-hmm yeah. There are a lot of webinars about any subject that you might imagine would be interesting ranging from the neuroscience behind cutting and what we can do relationally and with resonance to begin to remedy, a series of presentations about attachment and Beatrice's work and how it has an impact for us as adults and what we can do about it, lots [00:52:00] of presentations about family constellation work even online. And yeah, how do we make our brains good places to live?

[00:52:11] **Laura Reagan:** Oh gosh. And everything that I've experienced of your work has been wonderful and incredibly helpful. So I encourage everyone to go check out your website.

[00:52:23] Thank you, Laura.

[00:52:24] Well, Sarah, I just want to thank you again for returning to Therapy Chat today.

[00:52:28] **Sarah Peyton:** Thank you so much.

[00:52:29] **Announcer:** Thank you for listening to Therapy Chat with your host, Laura Reagan, LCSW-C. For more information, please visit therapychatpodcast.com.